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ABSTRACT

This booklet examines two frequently used public policy education models and illustrates how they may be used to develop and conduct extension education programs for communities struggling with change in general and for communities dealing with growth management issues in particular. The booklet opens with a brief discussion of key areas of concern in planning/implementing public policy education programs: information providers, decision criteria, objectivity, and program delivery. Following this, the advocacy approach to public resolution is mentioned briefly; however, while this model is widely known and accepted and while it always forces a solution, it is not education. Presented next are the basic components of the alternative/consequences model of public policy education and important principles public policy educators must follow to be effective. When the public policy education model is applied to conflict resolution, the educator becomes a facilitator in managing a collaborative negotiation process. The benefits and key components of the collaborative model are outlined, and an eight-step issue-to-public policy evolution model is detailed. Also detailed are the 11 identifiable steps in collaborative conflict resolution process. The costs and benefits of community change are weighed, and the role of extension education in resolving community change issues is analyzed. Contains 16 references. (MN)

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ED 366 720

PUBLIC POLICY EDUCATION

ITS ROLE IN COMMUNITY CHANGE

I know
no safe depository
of the ultimate powers
of the society but the
people themselves;

and if we think them
not enlightened enough
to exercise their control
with a wholesome discretion,

the remedy is not
to take it from them, but
to inform their discretion
by education.
~

Thomas Jefferson
In a letter to
William Charles Jarvis.
September 28 1820

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Coping With Growth

This publication was part of the Coping with Growth series produced by the Western Rural Development Center in 1979-80. The publications in that series have been reviewed, the information brought up to date, and the series name changed to indicate the relevance of these materials to circumstances other than growth. Other titles from the original series that have been revised include:

WREP 16	*Evaluating Fiscal Impact Studies*
WREP 17	*Minimizing Public Costs of Residential Growth*
WREP 20	*Coping with Rapid Growth: A Community Perspective*
WREP 21	*Citizen Involvement Strategies*
WREP 22	*Interagency Coordination*
WREP 29	*Assessing Fiscal Impact*
WREP 30	*Programming Capital Improvements*
WREP 31	*What does the Impact Statement Say about Economic Impacts?*
WREP 45	*Population Change: Know the Trends in Your Community*

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PUBLIC POLICY EDUCATION

An increasing amount of Extension work is public policy education at the local level, dealing with local issues. Many issues are much broader, however, and many of the management issues arising from change involve controversy over environmental values. These can be contentious, complicated and legally quite messy. There are key areas of concern which must be considered and addressed in planning and implementing public policy education programs. (Barron)

THE DECISION PROCESS: Regardless of who makes the decision it is likely to be made with incomplete information, with uncertainty, and with differing perceptions and evaluations of fact. In some cases it will be a legislative decision by a city council, county commissioners, legislature or congress. Other decisions get made by executive action and some are by public vote. Increasingly, interest groups and other stakeholders are seeking to break through their differences by negotiated conflict resolution.

THE INFORMATION PROVIDERS: Who has the relevant facts? Extension educators may be one source, but much information will emanate from other sources to be processed by decision makers.

THE DECISION CRITERIA: There must be rules or criteria to guide decision makers in choosing when to decide and what to decide. The criteria may be specific to each issue. It is important to consider the possible effects of decision errors, as well as who bears the burden of error.

THE OBJECTIVITY: Objectivity must be a major aim of any policy educator. The ultimate goal expressed by Jefferson is education. Thus, the educator must eschew advocacy of specific solutions or outcomes.

THE PROGRAM DELIVERY: Two separate, but related, approaches are described below. One involves broad scale educational efforts for all those affected by the issue, then stepping aside to let them to decide or choose. The second involves more direct interaction and facilitation by an educator who works to "broker" a decision among various interests through negotiation.

People and organizations approach a public issue in light of their values and beliefs. Values are an expression of what one thinks ought to be, while beliefs express one's idea of what is. There may be vast differences among the values and beliefs espoused by individuals and by the groups they form. The work here is to permit issue resolution by addressing the differences.

Values are an expression of what one thinks ought to be, while beliefs express one's idea of what is.

Most professionals who work with individual decision-making provide educational information that is based upon sufficient research to indicate highly probable results. Extension professionals tend to be trained in the physical or biological sciences, where laboratory techniques can exclude a lot of troublesome, irrelevant variables. Public policy, on the other hand, deals with people, and that immediately shifts the focus to the social sciences. Psychology, sociology, political science, and economics are much less precise and far less predictable than the physical sciences because they deal with human behavior, which is influenced by values, beliefs, experience and culture.

Most people involved in planning for growth management—planners, engineers, designers, etc.—are trained in the physical sciences and experienced with the technical side of the planning process—layout, design, and physical specifications. They may be ill-equipped to deal with the economic, political, and social effects associated with growth and change. This publication is directed to three major audiences: extension educators; professionals involved in all aspects of growth management and public decisions; and current and potential leaders of a wide variety of interest groups and organizations affected by growth and change.

Advocacy approach

This is the format in courts of law. The U.S. political process follows this model where candidates are expected to take stands on controversial issues, and they are voted up or down, depending upon how well their views reflect those of the voters in their districts.

The advocacy model of public resolution, because of its long history in the courts and in the political system, is widely recognized and readily accepted. It forces a solution. Court cases and elections have one thing in common: They always produce a winner and a loser. One way or another, the issue gets resolved. *But, the advocacy approach is not education.*

Alternative/consequences model

An alternative to the advocacy model is the public policy education process that focuses on alternatives and consequences. It has evolved over a period of years as a result of a pioneer group of Extension workers struggling with various client groups to help them deal with a variety of public problems. After considerable experience in conducting these types of programs, it was discovered that they all had identifiable components in common. The identification of those components ultimately came to be known among Extension workers as

the alternatives/consequences model. There are four basic components: (House and Young, p. 7):

1. Learners are those potentially affected by a public policy issue.
2. Extension educators are agents and specialists who involve learners in an educational program.
3. The context is public decision making: where, how, and by whom the decisions will be made.
4. The content is specific to the issue: how to increase understanding of the issue, identify alternative solutions and inform decision makers about the consequences of the alternatives.

Public policy issues evolve in a fairly predictable way which was first described in detail in 1973 as an issue cycle (Gratto). It was further extended by House and Hahn. Figure 1 describes the cycle with eight identifiable steps. Depending on the issue and how much conflict surrounds it, this cycle may last from a few weeks to many years. It begins when someone or a group senses that something is wrong and may need to be changed. They become involved with others and begin to more clearly define the issue. This leads to consideration of alternate courses of action and the expected consequences of each one. Eventually a decision is made through one process or another: by public vote, by legislation, or by agency decision. After the change is implemented, people assess whether it solved the original problem. If not, the cycle may begin again.

It is almost certain that some people will be analyzing consequences or ready to choose, while others have not yet clearly understood the issue.

The progress through this cycle is not as neat and smooth as may be implied in Figure 1. People will become concerned or involved at different times, so it is almost certain that some people will be analyzing consequences or ready to choose, while others have not yet clearly understood the issue. A common problem is confusing the symptoms of the issue with the issue itself. For successful resolution, the problem must be clearly identified. If the issue is contentious and affects many people or interest groups, there will be a lot of obfuscation as groups promote their own interests and solutions and attempt to discredit others.

The public policy education role is summarized in the boxes corresponding to the eight steps in the cycle. The policy educator provides information and analysis and/or facilitates a process to help people understand the issue, identify alternatives, examine the expected consequences and describe the decision process. There are several important principles the policy educator must follow to be effective.

1. Be sure you know where your audience is in the issue cycle. If you are describing alternatives and consequences for people who have not yet clearly defined or understood the issue, their effort will be wasted and confusing. Remember that different groups will be at different steps.
2. Never advocate a particular outcome or solution. It will compromise your credibility as an educator both now and in the future. Educators are people too, and have their own values and beliefs which prevent them from being completely objective and neutral. It is important to recognize that in yourself and to strive at all times not to let it influence your educational role. The challenge now is to strengthen advocates on all sides of the issue.
3. Do not describe the consequences of alternatives as *advantages* or *disadvantages* or *pros and cons*. What is a *pro* for one group is very likely to be a *con* for someone else.

4. Remember that the issue cycle does not end by choosing a solution. The solution has to be implemented and there is always the possibility of faulty implementation, because the consequences may turn out to be different than expected. The evaluation period should show if the solution works to satisfy the parties involved. In these last two steps the policy educator can again play an important role.
5. The policy educator does not participate directly in the decision on choice of alternative except to facilitate the understanding and participation of others in the decision-making process.
6. Be alert to recognize a teachable moment. This typically occurs when potentially affected people or groups are concerned enough about an issue that they are receptive to educational information. If, however, people have become so fervently wedded to inflexible positions that they are unable to accept additional information and analysis, it is unlikely an educational program will be successful (Sachs, et al.). This may, however, be a point where the collaborative conflict resolution model can be applied (see next section).

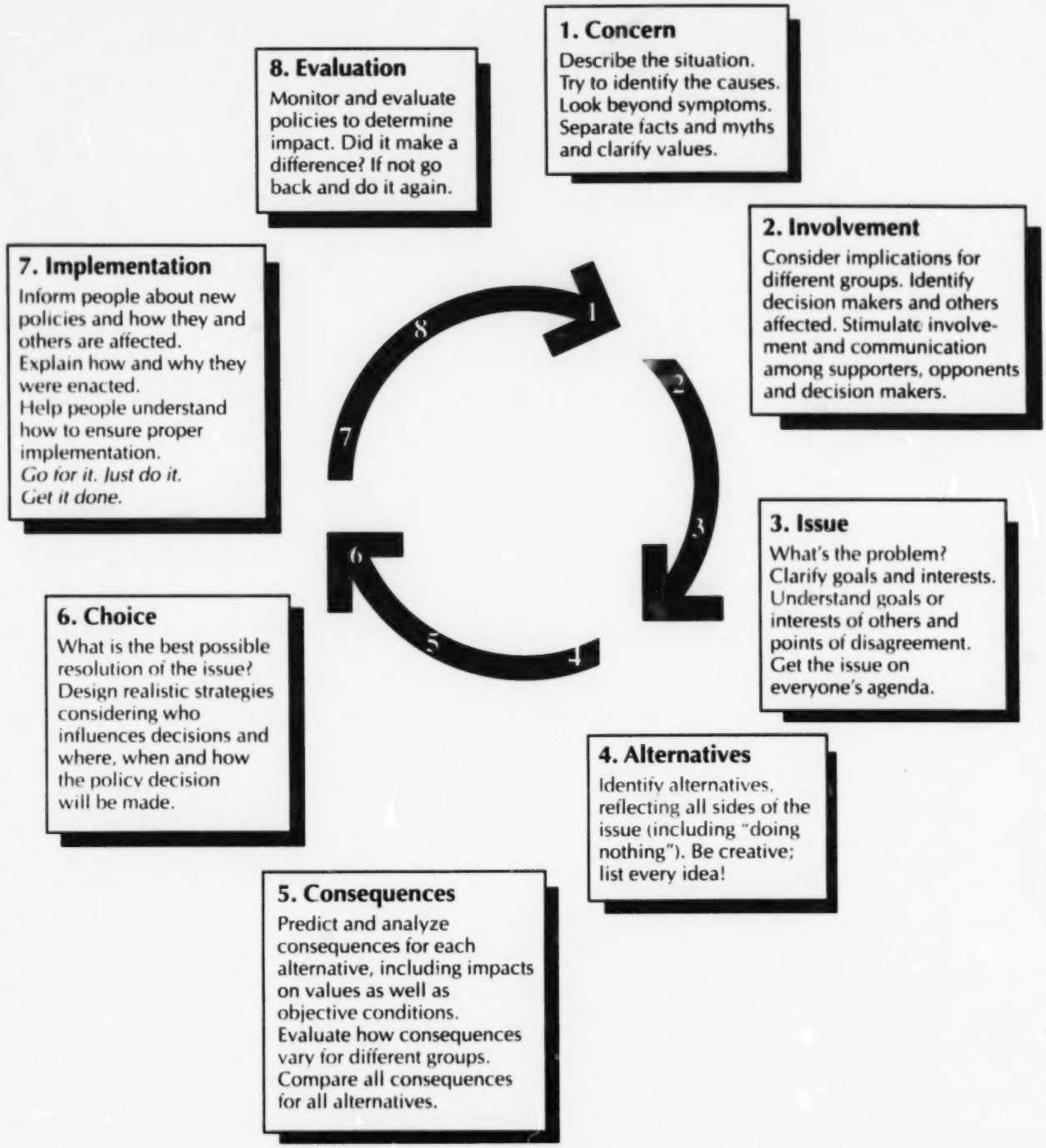
Public policy education has been closely linked with leadership development in many community or issue-based programs. The topic of leadership is beyond the scope of this publication, but interested people should look to the literature in the Family Community Leadership Resource Pack, available in each state Extension program, as one example. The paper by Rogers at the 1990 National Public Policy Education Conference is also a good reference (Rogers).

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Many issues in change management generate intense controversy that is so hot a teachable moment is past before intervention can begin. These situations can present special difficulties in finding acceptable solutions. Some policy educators have developed skills that enable them to become involved in negotiation and conflict resolution processes with adversarial groups (Fiske). These skills are dependent upon one's ability first, to recognize conflict, and then determine how it is to be addressed.

Conflict is an expressed difference between at least two interdependent parties who *perceive* incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference from another party in achieving their goals (Bauer and Watt, p. 7). From this definition, the key to resolving conflict rests on the parties' willingness to clearly communicate their perceptions to each other, and their readiness to modify those perceptions when additional data so warrant.

The role of the policy educator changes from "expert" to "supporter" when the public policy education model is applied to conflict resolution. The educator is not the direct provider of information and analysis, does not identify the alternatives, does not examine the expected consequences and does not describe the decision process. Instead, the educator now becomes the facilitator in teaching new behavior and managing a *collaborative* negotiation process that the participants follow to educate themselves, define and analyze the problem, search for alternative solutions, reach an agreement and begin implementation.


1. Concern
Describe the situation.
Try to identify the causes.
Look beyond symptoms.
Separate facts and myths
and clarify values.
2. Involvement
Consider implications for different groups. Identify decision makers and others affected. Stimulate involvement and communication among supporters, opponents and decision makers.
3. Issue
What's the problem?
Clarify goals and interests.
Understand goals or interests of others and points of disagreement.
Get the issue on everyone's agenda.
4. Alternatives
Identify alternatives, reflecting all sides of the issue (including "doing nothing"). Be creative; list every idea!
5. Consequences
Predict and analyze consequences for each alternative, including impacts on values as well as objective conditions.
Evaluate how consequences vary for different groups.
Compare all consequences for all alternatives.
6. Choice
What is the best possible resolution of the issue?
Design realistic strategies considering who influences decisions and where, when and how the policy decision will be made.
7. Implementation
Inform people about new policies and how they and others are affected.
Explain how and why they were enacted.
Help people understand how to ensure proper implementation.
Go for it. Just do it.
Get it done.
8. Evaluation
Monitor and evaluate policies to determine impact. Did it make a difference? If not go back and do it again.
1
2
3
4
5
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7
8

Figure 1. The Issue-to-Public Policy Evolution Model
(Adapted from Alan Hahn's *Public Policy Evolution Model*)

There are four key components in collaborative conflict resolution processes (Bauer and Watt, p. 21). Such processes are:

VOLUNTARY. The parties decide whether to participate and choose their own representatives.

INFORMAL. There are no externally imposed procedural rules. The parties control the entire process, including establishment of any procedural rules.

CONSENSUAL. All decisions, including adoption of a final agreement, are made by consensus. In brief, consensus is a non-voting method for making group decisions that all interests can support. Since there is no voting, decisions can only be arrived at through a process that encourages each interest to listen carefully, ask questions for clarification, and share the understanding with others around the table. Consensus is achieved when everyone agrees to a particular solution because they know it is the best alternative under the circumstances and because it attends to each party's most important interests.

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SUPPLEMENTARY TO EXISTING PROCEDURES. These processes do not replace current laws and procedures for resolving disputes; they are a supplementary procedure that may improve the traditional methods of resolving conflicts.

The facilitator's primary responsibility in conflict resolution is to create group processes that allow participants' needs to be addressed on three levels (Hackman, pp. 6-7): the *personal* (by providing a group experience that contributes to the growth and personal well-being of each member); the *interpersonal* (by designing a group experience that builds trust and member willingness to work together in the future); and *results oriented* (by achieving an outcome that gains the support and commitment of each participant).

Participant needs have a greater likelihood of being met when the facilitator utilizes a "principled negotiation, or negotiation on the merits" approach (Fisher and Ury, p. 11) to conflict resolution. This approach emphasizes four distinct considerations (Bauer and Watt, p. 21):

OF PEOPLE. Separate the people from the problem. The participants should see themselves as working together—attacking the problem, not each other.

OF INTERESTS. Focus on interests, not positions. Interests are the principles, values and/or belief systems which need to be satisfied if the conflict is to be equitably, practicably, legally, and thus durably resolved. Interests may be procedural, substantive and/or psychological (National Center Associates, Inc., p. 20A). Negotiating positions often obscure what the parties really want. Focusing the discussion on their underlying interests is more likely to result in an agreement that takes care of the needs that led the parties to adopt those positions.

OF OPTIONS. Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do. Invent options for mutual gain. The parties should set aside a time to invent a wide range of possible solutions that creatively advance the underlying interests of all the parties.

OF CRITERIA. Insist that the result be based on agreed upon objective standards. Insist on using criteria that satisfy underlying interests and that can be objectively evaluated by all concerned. By discussing the criteria by which to measure the problem and a proposed solution, no party needs to give in to another's viewpoint; both can defer to an objective solution.

According to Susskind and Cruikshank, the collaborative conflict resolution process model tends to involve three phases: pre-negotiation, negotiation and implementation. Figure 2 outlines the phases and their eleven identifiable steps.

Figure 2. The Collaborative Conflict Resolution Process
(Adapted from Susskind and Cruikshank, *Breaking the Impasse* New York: Basic Books 1987.)

Bauer and Watt (pp. 27-36) describe what is involved in each step of the collaborative conflict resolution process:

Pre-negotiation phase

Step 1. Getting Started

Helping the primary disputants decide if such a process is in their best interest, and initiating contact between the parties.

Step 2. Representation

Deciding which groups should be represented in the negotiations, and finding representation to legitimately speak for each group.

Step 3. Ground Rules and Agenda

Before the parties begin substantive negotiations, they should agree on two points: their procedures for working together; and what specific items they will discuss.

Step 4. Joint Fact Finding

This step involves the parties completing the following tasks: determining what information they have regarding the issue; identifying the portion of the information that is accepted as accurate by all the parties; and determining what additional information, if any, they need to negotiate effectively.

Brainstorming is a time when all ideas should be offered.

Negotiation phase

Step 5. Inventing Options for Mutual Gain

It is important to ensure that all participants have a common understanding of the problem or the issues to be solved. To invent options for mutual gain, the parties must first clearly state their interests to each other. They then go through a brainstorming session whose purpose is to produce as many ideas as possible for solving the problem.

For the process to work well, it is necessary to set the tone for the brainstorming as a time when *all* ideas should be offered.

Step 6. Packaging Agreements

Once the parties feel they have invented enough options, they must decide which ones to include in a proposed agreement. The parties should remain mindful of each other's interests while working through this step.

Step 7. Binding Parties to Their Commitments

An important part of creating an agreement to resolve a dispute is including provisions to ensure the parties will honor the terms of that agreement. This generally requires careful sequencing of required actions and performance measures. It may be helpful to include contingencies in the agreement to cover unforeseen circumstances or failure by one party to uphold his or her end of the agreement.

Step 8. Producing a Written Agreement

This step is crucial, for it ensures that the parties will not leave the negotiations with different interpretations of the agreement. It usually is best to use a "single-text procedure" to produce a written agreement, rather than each party drafting his or her version of what was agreed upon. Using this procedure, one negotiator (or a small subcommittee or facilitator) is designated to write a draft of the agreement. This draft is circulated among the participants for comments and changes until all parties have approved it.

Step 9. Ratification

When a negotiator represents a group of constituents, he or she must submit the written agreement for their approval. However, the negotiating group should agree on the form of ratification that is necessary from each party.

Implementation

Step 10. Linking the Agreement to Formal Decision Making

A ratified agreement must be linked to the decision-making procedures mandated by state statutes and local ordinances. How this takes place depends on the substance of the agreement and at what point in the required decision-making process negotiation occurred. If a decision maker is assured that all parties affected by an issue have agreed to a solution, and that solution is in accordance with the criteria he or she must use to make the decision, that decision maker often will be inclined to approve the agreement.

Step 11. Monitoring Implementation

This process is very similar to the joint fact-finding process described earlier. The parties must agree to an objective standard for measuring compliance and a schedule for carrying out the monitoring process. The monitoring system can be self-enforcing. If the agreement is not working out as intended, a procedure can be developed to reconvene the parties. That procedure should be spelled out in the written agreement.

Depending on the particular phase, the facilitator may be doing any one of a number of tasks to assist the process and to improve participant listening and communication skills, such as (Bauer and Watt, p. 37):

- establishing a positive attitude;
- making logistical arrangements for the first meeting;
- assisting in setting the agenda;
- helping the initial stakeholders identify other parties who should be represented;
- suggesting procedures for the group to follow, and ensuring that the procedures are followed;
- getting agreement on the procedure and on ground rules to be followed throughout the process, and enforcing those ground rules;
- assisting in defining the problem and clarifying what type of outcome is desired by the group;
- encouraging all participants to take ownership of the problem and the responsibility for resolving it;
- drafting the proposed agreement.

Straus (pp. 35-37) notes several important principles for facilitators to keep in mind during collaborative conflict resolution processes:

REPRESENTATION. You need to include from the beginning all the stakeholders who have the power to make decisions, are responsible for implementing them, are affected by them, and have the power to block them.

AGREEING ON THE PROBLEM. If you do not agree on the problem, you will never agree on the solution. The success of a collaborative planning process depends on clarifying and legitimizing interests and

The success of a collaborative planning process depends on clarifying and legitimizing interests and reaching consensus on the definition and root causes of a problem before moving on to solutions.

reaching consensus on the definition and root causes of a problem before moving on to solutions.

OWNING AND DESIGNING THE PROCESS. The participants have to own the process from the very beginning. As the facilitator, you must assist the participants to design the process themselves.

CONCENTRIC RINGS OF INVOLVEMENT. Large scale collaborative processes can become overly structured and bureaucratic quite easily. The group can begin to think of itself as *the* community and close its doors to all newcomers. It is important to find ways to involve people who want to join after the process has begun.

COMMITTING TIME, ENERGY, AND RESOURCES. It takes time, energy, and money to make collaborative processes work. People will believe that you are serious when resources are committed.

AN OPEN AND VISIBLE PROCESS. The process must be open and visible. You cannot build broad-based consensus if no one knows about it.

TEACHING NEW BEHAVIOR. The quality of what happens and the way people behave in the face-to-face sessions really makes a difference. Participants must be coached on how to participate effectively and must be taught a new set of leadership skills. The exciting thing about collaborative processes is that they are educational and they empower people. People can take the skills back to their own organizations. When these skills are disseminated throughout the community, the community is able to handle conflicts in more constructive ways.

Policy educators have the opportunity to positively shape dispute resolution processes in ways that respect the individual, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and generate outcomes that are acceptable to all participants. Their training and experience offer relevant substantive and procedural assistance to people caught in the middle of conflicts. Although this is a relatively new area of involvement for many educators, including Extension educators, it appears that facilitating the collaborative resolution of conflicts will assume greater organizational importance in the future.

COMMUNITY CHANGE: COSTS AND BENEFITS

With all issues of community change, there are costs and there are benefits. New housing developments create wealth in a community by virtue of their existence. They add to the tax base and therefore contribute to local government and schools which derive much of their incomes from property tax revenues. But such developments also create costs. New streets have to be laid out and surfaced; new sewer and water lines have to be dug; perhaps new wells must be drilled; additions to an existing sewage treatment plant may be required. These costs and benefits can be estimated with an acceptable degree of accuracy, and can thus be compared. Most people prefer to see the benefit side exceed the costs.

But there is another element of equal importance, and it is around this point that most of the battles of change management are joined. This issue is the distribution of costs and benefits associated with community change. Who bears the costs? Who reaps the benefits?

It seems to be characteristic of most change management issues that the potential gains are concentrated among fewer individuals and/or organizations than are the losses. The losses,

therefore, are spread over a greater number of organizations and/or individuals, with each loser tending to lose less than each gainer is likely to gain. In some instances the stakes can be quite high.

The net result is that, in the advocacy approach (probably the one being followed), information supporting the cause of the gainers is more likely to be sought and used than is information about the losers' position. It may be useful to observe that in the advocacy approach, in the interest of fairness, both sides should have relatively equal resources to develop information supportive of their positions. Because of the relative costs involved in obtaining information and the relative payoffs, data supporting the case of the gainers often tends to outweigh that of the losers.

Advocacy-based decisions typically result in win/lose outcomes. The value of the two public policy education models is to concentrate on the problem and assess all alternatives and their consequences so that win/win outcomes have a better chance of being realized.

It seems to be characteristic of most change management issues that the potential gains are concentrated among fewer individuals and/or organizations than are the losses.

Extension's role

Recall the advocacy approach and the two public policy models discussed above: the alternatives/consequences model, and the collaborative model. Most of the activity that takes place on community change issues conforms to the advocacy model—the public hearings of planning commissions, boards of review, city councils, and boards of county commissioners follow this model. In fact, of all those who are likely to become involved, Extension may stand alone in using the public policy education model. This may not make the educational task any easier—but it does make it all the more important.

For example, a county planning department may seek Extension's help in acquiring public input for a comprehensive plan. The planning department may expect Extension, as a cooperating public agency, to become an advocate of the planning department's position in its public presentations. When the Extension presentation describes this position as well as opposing positions—and when that presentation involves the assessment of the consequences of these various options—the planning staff may feel betrayed. Strained relations between the two agencies can easily result.

In most instances such difficulties can be avoided if agencies who seek the assistance of the Extension Service are carefully informed about the public policy process model, and reminded that the basic mission of Extension is education. In this case, education of an electorate means that viable options are developed and likely consequences are assessed. The final decision must be reserved for those who will bear the consequences of that course of action—the people themselves.

If meaningful public participation is the goal, public policy education must be introduced in the early stages of the change management process. At this point, positions have not been publicly announced or solidified and people have not yet made up their minds on issues. In short, the educational process at this time still has a reasonable chance of contributing to a cooperative decision. On the other hand, if public participation is viewed only as a token exercise, citizen involvement in the process will vanish.

The role of Extension and the skills required are different for the collaborative model. It differs in key ways from the policy education

model. Here the educator is not the main source of information or analysis, but plays a brokering and facilitating role. Leadership ability is essential. It demands the kind of leadership that empowers others to take responsibility for their own decisions and analysis while working productively in collaboration with others to achieve a consensus agreement. Great patience, ability to listen, ability to synthesize, a sense of humor, and tolerance for ambiguity are all required.

The risks associated with public policy development are real; they are substantial, and they must be squarely faced. At the same time, the rewards can be highly gratifying when people become aware that there is in their midst an educational organization—the Extension Service or other group—that can make a material and objective contribution toward the resolution of public issues of vital concern to their community.

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The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.

This publication discusses two frequently used public policy education models and illustrates how they relate to communities struggling with change in general and to community growth management issues in particular.

Nationally, the Extension Service has conducted policy education programs on many issues over several decades and regions of the country. Out of this experience, Extension has adopted a statement from its Strategic Planning Council:

The Cooperative Extension System is committed to addressing the nation's need for public issues education. Public issues education: educational programs which have the objective of enhancing the society's capacity to understand and address issues of widespread concern (ECOP, p. 33).

Public problems differ from private ones in three ways. First, public issues require decision making by groups rather than individuals. Second, large numbers of people are affected by those decisions. Thus, many viewpoints and perceptions must be considered. Third, because of the differing interests of people and groups, resolving public issues always involves some degree of conflict (Sachs, et al.).

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